

STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

This is what we have heard so far...

Parking

There is general support for additional parking around the Promenade and maintaining metered parking along the street. There is also a desire to implement additional Parking Demand Management efforts for the area. Many were in favor of the Transportation Center concept at the Overlook site as an additional parking option.

Maintenance-Related Issues

The Promenade has generally been neglected over the years and is suffering from: water & drainage issues, crumbling curbs along median and sidewalks, missing pavers, calcium deposits under the structure, and deteriorating and rusting lighting. A better general maintenance plan needs to be developed and implemented as soon as possible.

Accessibility

There is a desire to improve accessibility for both pedestrians and vehicles throughout the area. New concepts need to be mindful of emergency evacuations and ADA requirements. Many would like to see improved accessibility between the lower levels (10th street, shopping, D Street, etc.) and the upper Promenade. 24/7 access needs to be maintained during any construction as USPS operates around the clock. There is support for prohibiting truck traffic along Promenade for security and functional reasons. Any new concepts should accommodate future public transit along the Promenade and tie in to any light rail along Maine Avenue or 9th Street. There is a desire to maintain vehicular access from the Promenade to Maine Avenue.

Connectivity

There is strong support for improving the overall connectivity of the Promenade with the Mall, the waterfront, and areas east & west. New wayfinding, signage and possibility renaming the Promenade '10th Street' would help to better orient visitors to the area. There is support for new Metro entrances from the L'Enfant Station to exit onto the Promenade or closer to the waterfront. Studies should look for additional east/west vehicular connections for the Promenade (such as decking over railroad or removing railroad). There should be multiple, marked and convenient at-grade crossings for pedestrians at Maine, Independence and along D Street. The study needs to consider both a pedestrian overpass and an at-grade crossing from the Promenade over Maine to the Waterfront. Incorporating bike routes is a concern for new designs. There is interest in removing the Promenade and rebuilding 10th Street at grade as well as desires to turn the SW Freeway into a boulevard. A new pedestrian connection to Haines Point is desired.

Security

Security is a major concern for several Federal tenants in the area. Major concerns and fears exist from employees working in high-risk federal buildings. Limiting traffic or closing the street under the DOE building should be considered. Another option is to limit traffic to taxis, buses and future downtown circulator only. Eliminating left turns from Independence Avenue onto the Promenade would help with security concerns. Another option is to take a "surgical approach" to removing parking from highly vulnerable spots rather than blanket removal. Truck access to the Promenade should be restricted. The railroad presents a hazard and rerouting freight rail and tunneling the railroad or removing it all together is a consideration. Another option would be to remove a portion of the DOE building that spans the Promenade. Suggestions to accommodate concerns during heighten security times include allowing for pop up barricades on the Promenade. As well, evacuation routes for the entire Promenade needs to be studied. Creating greater standoff distances from buildings and parked vehicles needs to be considered. There are also some who feel that security should not be a primary issue driving future design considerations for the Promenade. There is concern that security measures may be very superficial and everyday enjoyment should not be sacrificed for security enhancements that provide diminishing returns.

Safety

General activity, lighting and police presence needs to be improved to make the area safer at night. Currently the area is known to have muggings and drug dealings occur in the evening hours. The stairs connecting Promenade to D Street are also currently very dangerous & un-welcoming. The area under the Promenade between D Street & the railroad tracks is a major blight & presents security/safety concerns.

Environmental Concerns

The Promenade is almost entirely a hardscape condition with no pervious surfaces. New designs should consider creative stormwater management techniques and the introduction of more greenspace. New landscaping elements need to be hearty and native so that they stay healthy and productive. Summer shade is important - natural opportunities such as trees need to be looked at.

Aesthetics & Other Design Considerations

The area currently lacks a coherent design vocabulary for way-finding, lighting, seating, etc. New streetscape elements should help to create a new identity for the Promenade and connect with the Waterfront or the Mall area (perhaps coordinating with the new Mall-wide signage program to be implemented in summer '03). The future of the Promenade should include major new landscaping and greenspace. New points of interest (e.g. public art, informational kiosks, vendors, interpretive exhibits, etc.) along sidewalks would help to enliven the street. The grand scale of the area should be mitigated by introducing new buildings and structures. A major destination should be created at the Overlook site. There is support for placing a new structure on axis or framing the site and maintaining open vistas/views. Views from the overlook back to the Smithsonian castle should be emphasized by removing blockages. More vertical points of interest along Promenade should be considered to draw people from up Independence Avenue. Shade needs to be provided along the Promenade either with overhead canopies or trees. The perception of the vast distance from Independence Avenue to points south is a deterrent for pedestrians - there are no visual cues as to what lies beyond. The conditions under the Promenade on 10th street need to be improved. To improve the pedestrian experience designs should provide a garden-like reprieve along median (similar to Sculpture Garden). There is some desire to keep the ceremonial front door of USPS open and free of major monument or memorial. A stronger "gateway" to the Promenade at Independence Avenue needs to be considered. The DOE should move forward with the design competition proposals and create interest on the "big blank wall" located along the railroad tracks to provide more interest on the Promenade. For the Overlook site, care should be taken to not build a "behemoth" structure that perpetuates the modernist approach - more human scale designs should occur. Consider the Overlook site as a "gateway to the Waterfront." Any new parking at the Overlook site should be below grade. Create a pedestrian friendly street edge along Maine Avenue below Overlook site.

Memorial/Museum Considerations

The L'enfant area is designated for future memorial/museum considerations. There is a desire to keep the focus on Banneker and other founding fathers of the District (Banneker, Ellicott, L'Enfant, etc.). Future museums/memorials should also focus on the African American history of the site and the SW Waterfront. The overlook site should be designated to a single significant museum or memorial of national importance. There is an opportunity to create a major point of interest for a potential new monument at the Maryland avenue axis providing views to Capitol. A new visitor's center in conjunction with a Banneker Memorial should be considered near Independence Avenue. The concept for the Bannekar Memorial should be implemented along the Promenade. A range of uses on the Overlook site needs to be considered (Museum, Think Tank, Memorial, etc). A new memorial/museum masterplan for the entire Promenade needs to be created.

Historical Considerations

There is a strong desire to recapture the history of the area in any new design considerations. This involves the African American History (Banneker, Underground Railroad 'safe house', Pre-50's Displacement, the Pearl, etc.), the Waterfront (shipping, retail, 7th Street Corridor, etc.), Modernism (Looking back at original design intent of Pei, Kiley and others and documenting it). One option might be to restore the original street grid patterns and its pre-urban renewal conditions of the area.

Redevelopment Opportunities

The existing development on the Promenade does not utilize all the developable area and should look at new air-rights opportunities and infill options. One option is to redevelop the overlook site as: a major museum with integrated parking & mixed uses along 9th Street and Maine Avenue; a major new transportation center, a Banneker Memorial, or other cultural uses. As well, some of the existing federal office functions along the Promenade should be replaced with cultural, restaurant and retail uses, especially at street-level to create activity during off hours and on the weekend. The study should also consider creating more "visually permeable first floors" for L'Enfant Plaza buildings. The L'Enfant Plaza buildings were designed for first floor retail and should be explored as market conditions would support this type of use.

Other Issues

All options should be long-term in nature and consider that the existing buildings & current uses will not last forever. Currently, the Promenade area is seen as a major design failure, therefore starting over from scratch and considering the highest and best use should be an option. All options need to consider phasing and interim improvements. As well, nothing done in the short-term should perpetuate the current dysfunction. Joint development opportunities with the private sector for major infrastructure investments should be explored. There is a need to build consensus as part of the design process to integrate efforts for the Banneker Memorial, future museum/memorial at Overlook Site, security issues, parking, etc.

These summary comments were compiled from individual stakeholder meetings and the December 4, 2002 Stakeholder charette.